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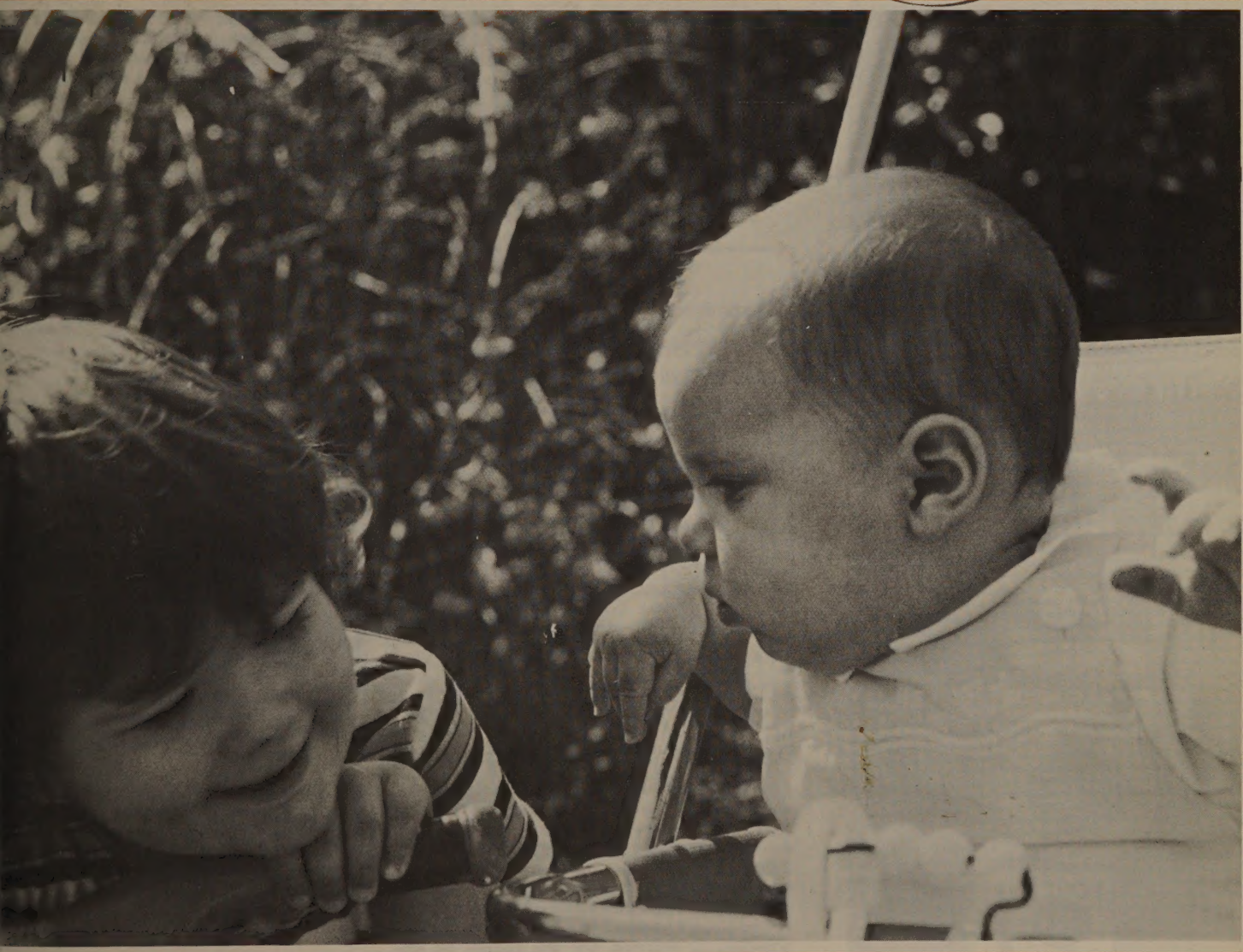

IN FAVOR OF LIFE:

"THE LEAST OF OF YOUR BROTHERS" by Chiara Lubich page 2
"There can be no doubt: God loves life. Only love in the hearts of human beings can bring about the triumph of life."

MARIAPOLIS 1981 page 9

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2 *THE LEAST OF YOUR BROTHERS: Chiara Lubich considers the issue of abortion from a spiritual point of view. "A strong current of Christian love pervading our entire society, would be the best prevention against the evils of our times. . . ."*

9 *MARIAPOLIS 1981: A ten-page cov age of the four Mariapoli held in Nor America this past summer. Two tho sand people from all over the Unit States, Canada and Puerto Rico parti pated in these week-long summer gath ings of the Focolare Movement.*

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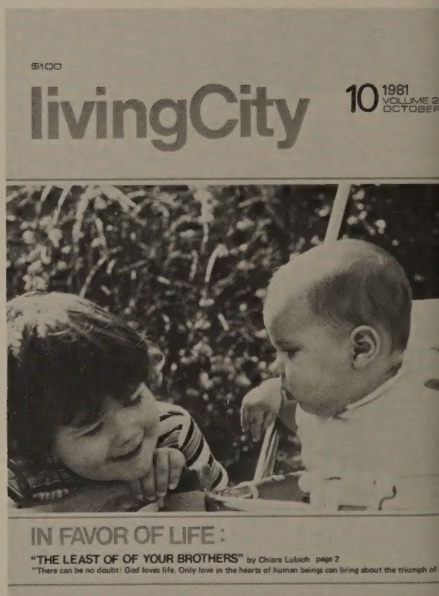

IN FAVOR OF LIFE: The abortion is remains a great problem of our times. I well to reflect on our commitment as Ch tians to "choose life," aware that many ture lives may depend on us, on our figh favor of life.

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23 *I LIVE TO MEET HIM: The stories of three young men, all members of the Gen Movement, and how they faced death. "I don't know how long I still have to live. But while I still have the strength I want to tell you that I can feel in my heart that God loves me."*

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THE LEAST OF YOUR BROTHERS

by CHIARA LUBICH

The problem of abortion is one of the great problems of our times. We are publishing here the transcript of a speech given by Chiara Lubich in Rome's Teatro Adriano *on May 10, 1981, where a panel of experts dealt with this issue from different points of view. In her talk, Chiara considers the issue from the spiritual point of view, proposing a "choice of life," based on Christian convictions. Its universality makes the concepts she speaks of applicable to any society at any time.*

The problem of abortion can be seen from various points of view — humanitarian, social, legal, medical, political, etc. I would like to look at it primarily from the spiritual, the Christian point of view.

For those of us who believe in God, it's his idea that we want to have very clear. And I'm certain that it is an idea that cannot leave even those who do not believe indifferent. In fact, since we have all been created in God's image, we are Christian by nature; and the more we are pure, sincere, and authentic, the more this quality becomes evident.

God's idea! How can we ever understand, or at least have an intuition of it? Above all we can understand it by reading the sacred texts which open up as a hymn to life. God calls the whole universe into being; he gives life to plants, animals, and finally man and woman, creating them in his own "image and likeness."

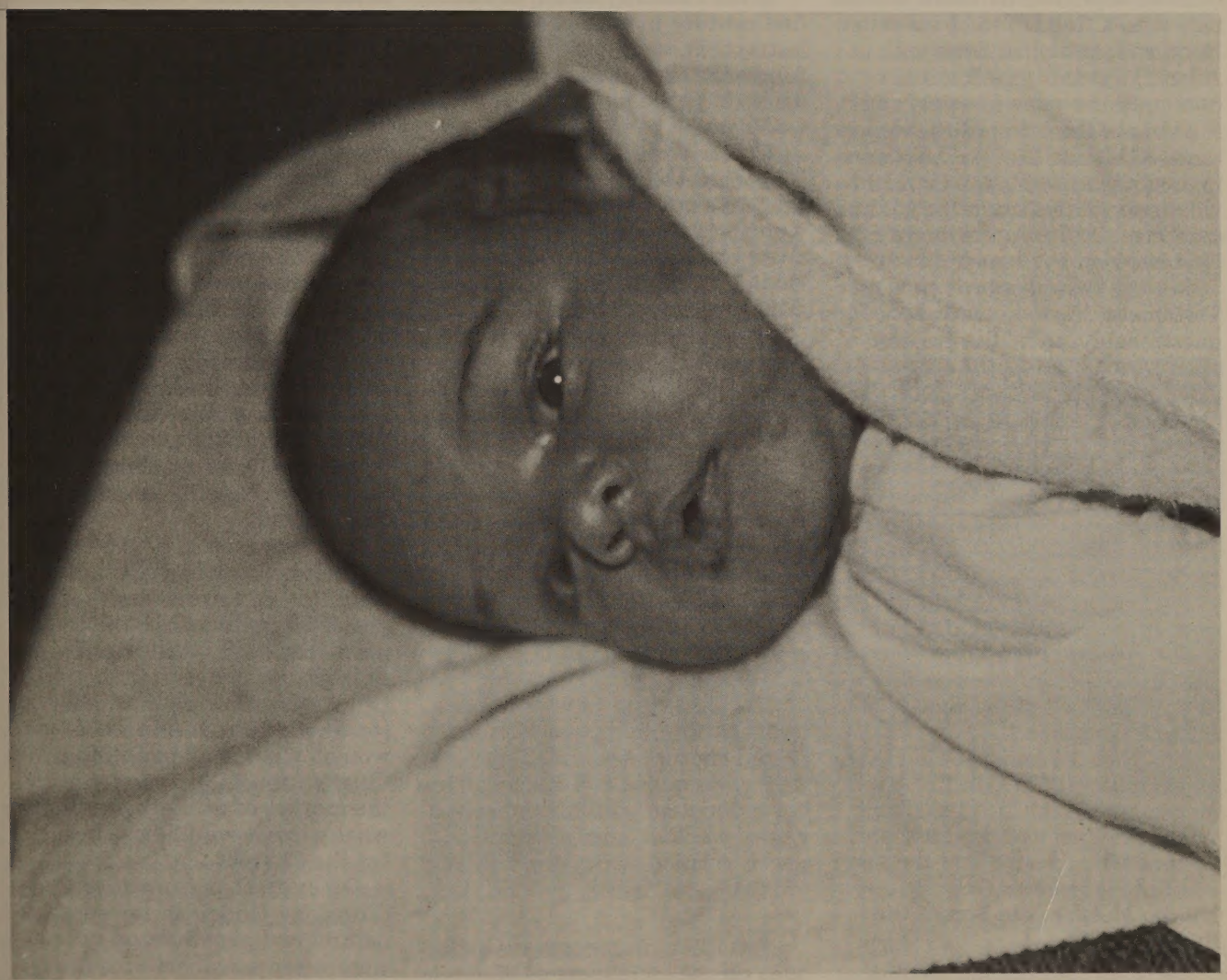
But God does not only bring the universe into existence. He also wants to sustain it by establishing laws, by giving an order to be followed. He wants to assure life to all living creatures by feeding them the proper food and by telling them to multiply, each in their own species, so that they may fill the earth.

Even though, following Adam and Eve's grave disobedience, God punishes them in vital aspects of their existence — he tells the woman: " . . . in pain shall you bring forth children,"[1] and says to the man, " . . . by the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat,"[2] — he still manifests himself as the God of life. The story of Genesis, in fact, does not end with punishment, but with the heralding of salvation.

The words God addresses to Cain who had just killed his brother reaffirm once more the value of human life in God's eyes: "What have you done? Listen: Your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil. . . You shall become a restless wanderer on the earth."[3]

Cain, in the throws of despair, fears to be killed by anyone who crosses his path, but the Lord answers him: "If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold;"[4] and, in order to make sure that Cain not be struck down, the Lord marks him with a special sign.

This is how much God wants to protect life, also the life of someone guilty of violence.



"It is a fact that the child to be born is a human being from the moment of conception. . . . From the very first days in the womb of the mother, children carry — by a fascinating law of nature — all the elements which make up the man or woman they will be."

Further on in Genesis we read that the Lord, in seeing how great is man's wickedness on earth, and how no desire that his heart conceived is ever anything but evil, decides to wipe out the whole human race with a flood. Yet he saves Noah and, as he had done with Adam, gives this new founder of humanity the same blessing, and the same affirmation of the importance of human life: " . . . from man in regard to his fellow man I will demand an accounting for human life. . . . For in the image of God has man been made."[5]

For the first people of the Old Testament, life was considered, unquestionably, to be the greatest gift. A long life was the promise given to those who observed God's commands. "Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life and prosperity in the land which the Lord your God is giving you."[6]

Undeniably, the Lord's blessing consists in giving life.

We read in the Book of Wisdom: " . . . Because God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being."[7]

The New Testament is likewise an exaltation of life. In the Apocalypse Jesus is called, "The Living": "I am the First and the Last; and the one who lives:"[8] and the same attribute is given to God: " . . . you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."[9]

The whole mission of Jesus is centered on giving both supernatural and natural life. He says of himself: "I am the resurrection and the life;"[10] and, "I am the way, the truth and the life."[11] And all those who are united to him, the mediator of life, receive the same life: ". . . . that all who believe may have eternal life in him."[12]

Jesus raised the dead, and cured every kind of sickness.

The early Christians, still imbued with the teaching of Jesus who, not too long before, had walked among them, applied his commandments, which were in favor of life, to every aspect and every moment of human existence.

In the *Didache*, an important first century manual of Christian instruction, we read: "[Those who follow the way of death are] murderers of children, destroyers of God's image."[13]

The letter of Barnabas, which is a long catechetical treatise of the 2nd century, contains these words: "Do not kill a fetus by abortion or commit infanticide. Do not withdraw your hand from your son or your daughter."[14]

In the writings of the 2nd century apologist Athenagoras of Athens, we find: "Women who induce abortion are murderers and will have to give an account of it to God."[15]

And Tertullian, who lived between the 2nd and 3rd centuries, expressed his point of view very clearly, when he said: "But with us murder is forbidden once for all. We are not permitted to destroy even the fetus in the womb."[16]

The Greek and Latin Patristics consider the child to be born as sacred because it is willed by God. This child must be protected. Thus for a Christian, also life conceived out of wedlock comes from God and is entitled to develop freely.

This, then, in general, is God's idea on the sacredness of life — which is not to be tampered with — as it emerges from Sacred Scripture and from the doctrine of the Church Fathers.

But we can deduce God's idea in another way as well; namely, from his line of action.

Today, and rightly so, the Church teaches us to acknowledge the necessity of responsible parenthood. Without disregarding this, one fact remains relevant. Oftentimes, when God wanted to endow the Mystical Body of Christ with particular graces or special charisms, or prevent, or offer a remedy to the ills afflicting humanity, he chose his messengers from among the children of fairly large or even very large families, or among parents of numerous children.

When he wanted for instance, the new Swiss Confederation to have solid Christian foundations, God chose St. Nicola of Flue, father of ten children, to carry out this task.

When God decided to help France by giving new vigor to the faith of its people, or by nourishing it with supernatural life in front of a spreading materialistic mentality, he chose the Cure of Ars from a family of six children, and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus who was the ninth child in her family. St. Vincent de Paul came from a family of six children, and St. Frances Cabrini was the thirteenth child.

The two doctors of the Church, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena, natural and worthy protectors of an enlightened feminism, had twelve and twenty-two siblings, respectively. Catherine in fact was the twenty-third child in the family. If ever there was a woman who could have said, "that's enough," it was certainly the mother of St. Catherine. But what a loss it would have been for the Church!

Other great personalities endowed by God with indisputable natural and supernatural gifts were often members of quite large families. Examples are Pope John XXIII, Martin Luther King, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare.

There can be no doubt: God loves life.

We know, however, that the best qualified interpreters of God's will throughout the centuries, also on this subject, are the successors of the apostles — the popes and bishops. It was for them that Jesus said: "Anyone who listens to you listens to me."[17] Thus Jesus speaks through them.

"From its beginnings up to the present, the Christian community has always deduced from the word of God that abortion must be condemned," states a document compiled by the Italian bishops in 1972. And not too long ago they affirmed once more that induced abortion is the killing of an innocent creature.

In recent times the Pope has had this very serious problem at heart in a particular way. His words reveal the concern of the universal Shepherd for so many lives in danger of being suppressed. On Easter Sunday of this year, Pope John Paul II declared forcefully before the whole world: " . . . May the plans and programs for the protection of human life prevail, and not the illusions of those who see human progress in the right to inflict death on life which has just been conceived."[18]

This is God's idea: do not kill, do not ever kill!

Motherhood, however, demands a lot. To give birth to children, to raise, maintain and educate them entails suffering and sacrifices, worry, concerns, sleepless nights, disappointments, money.

Yet God repeats: do not kill, do not ever kill!

But God is not a tyrant. He is so demanding, because he has supplied the way, and given the means to help carry out this commandment of his.

How?

God relies on the love living in human hearts and has strengthened it in a divine way. He has engrafted on this love the love that comes from on High, and has enkindled in human hearts the flame of divine love.

It is always an amazing spectacle to see how in springtime the warmth of the sun can transform nature. Everything comes to life and buds forth. The trees turn green, and are bedecked with blossoms. It is something wonderful to see! And yet also in wintertime, the earth had been guarding and protecting the seeds which now palpitate with life. But it takes the warmth of the sun to make them blossom.

It is not spring as we find it marked by the calendar, not the day of March 21, however, that works this explosion of life. It is the sun and its warmth that causes it. If it gets warm early, even in wintertime, the earth does not ask whether or not spring has come; it blossoms anyway.

And just as the sun makes life blossom in nature, only love in the hearts of human beings can bring about the triumph of life.

Today a civilization of death seems to advance in the world. It is physical death, and spiritual death: abortion, euthanasia, rearmament, war, reinstatement of the death penalty, terrorism, killings and suicide.

A strong current of Christian love pervading our entire society, would be the best prevention against these evils of our times, and would give us the strength to do everything possible, already now, to eliminate or diminish them.

Love is the essence of the Gospel; it is the specific vocation of the followers of Christ. And those who love, do not kill.

It is a fact that the child to be born is a human being from the moment of conception. Science has now revealed to us this marvelous reality. From the very first days, children in the womb of the mother, carry — by a fascinating law of nature — all the elements which make up the man or woman they will be. Their human venture has already started and will see its conclusion only with death. This is the truth that we must all acknowledge.

The child therefore is not an extension of the mother: he or she is another human being.

Thus, when it comes to abortion, we cannot speak of a woman's right to self-determination. We may, perhaps, and up to a certain point make our own decisions in matters concerning our person. We cannot, however, "self-determine" the destiny of another human being.

Children are not their mother's property. There are no rights over them. On the contrary, there is the basic duty to protect their life.

A woman's greatness, her personal growth, lies in this and certainly not in the destruction of life. And the battles that modern women now wage for their liberation, should not be those aimed at eliminating the child of their own womb, but those assuring the best conditions for a victory of the life they carry.

But, in order to better put these truths into practice in our lives, it is necessary to revive divine love in our hearts; divine love which is the fire that Jesus brought to the world, and wishes to see enkindled.

We received this gift with baptism. If we partake of the other sacraments, if we practice the virtues taught by Christ, if we pray, this love will remain with us; it will be nourished, it will grow, and it will make the "yoke" of motherhood light and gentle.

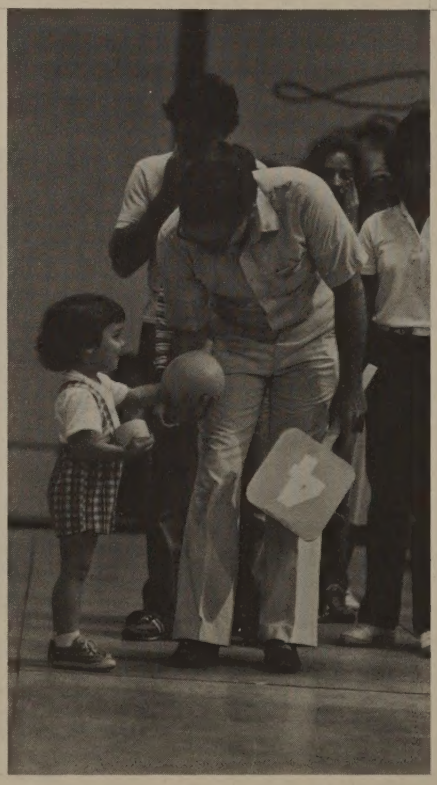
This was the experience of the early Christians. For this reason they obeyed that which Jesus, and later the apostles, and later still the Church Fathers said. And they did it with joy. If today's mothers have this love in their hearts, they will see no difficulty in giving life to the children that God sends to them. In this, too, they will find their fulfillment, for as partners with God the Creator they will concur with him in his plan to populate the earth with new offspring.

This supernatural love, engrafted on our nature, will give some mothers, even in our day (in some very extreme cases), the strength to face and accept, if necessary, the greatest sacrifice — that of giving their own life so that their child may live.

With this kind of love burning in their heart, mothers will always have the courage to live their motherhood even to the point of heroism. Jesus never said, "Save your life at the expense of someone else's." He said: "Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."[19] And only God knows the reward awaiting mothers called to such supreme sacrifice.

And if love is kept alive in the hearts of Christians, it will not be hard to ask also men to accept their share of responsibility. Children, in fact, do not belong to the mother alone, but to both parents.

Nowadays there is a tendency to portray motherhood as a question concerning only women. But it is not so.



Love will engender, in the best way, in the hearts of men the sense of responsibility toward the lives which they too have generated. If we lose sight of this common responsibility, we destroy the very meaning of the family seen as a community, the community of two people united in love, looking forward to new life. Another consequence would be a tendency to separate humanity into two parts: the woman and the child on one side; and the man, selfish and indifferent, on the other.

Furthermore, love for God and love for neighbor are nourished one by the other. Like a plant which, the deeper it thrusts down its roots, the higher it shoots toward the sky; in the same way, the greater is the love of a Christian towards others, the more profound is his or her union with God. And in this union with God, the Christian finds a renewed need for prayer, and with this, a love for continence.

Charity, love is the queen and the mother of all the virtues. It gives birth to purity, to chastity, and it extinguishes all selfishness. He who loves masters his passions, has respect toward others, and therefore also toward his wife and the new human being who might come to life in her womb. When love is like this, it is possible to effectively put into practice responsible parenthood in the right way.

Love, as we well know, leads to giving of self, and those who love know by experience the truth of Jesus' words: "Give and it shall be given to you."[20] Those who love know that they are not alone in having to provide for the material necessities of life, but that these, together with the spiritual ones, are generously bestowed upon them by the Heavenly Father who, having created his children, also takes care of their needs. The words of Scripture: "Seek first his kingship over you (which is the kingship of love), his way of holiness, and all these things will be given to you besides,"[21] are a daily experience for those who love in this way. And so are the others, like: "Look at the lilies of the field, they do not spin, they do not weave; but I tell you, Solomon in all his splendor was not arrayed like any one of them."[22]

Food, clothing, money, furniture, homes, medicine — everything we need will come to us. The Father will see to it.

Love, furthermore, urges Christians to repeat, in some way, at all times and everywhere, the extraordinary experience of the early Christians: "The community of believers were of one heart and one mind . . . nor was there anyone needy among them." [23]

This is the most radical way to solve another problem, the financial one, which so often creates obstacles for a family's acceptance of new offspring.

In this light and with this spirit of faith and communion children will once more be considered a blessing, and welcomed as such.

What is needed therefore is a powerful current of love among all: among members of our families, of different families, among members of lay and religious groups, in the midst of all Christians, among believers and people of good will. A current of love everywhere — in offices, factories, schools, among the little ones, the young, the adults, among people of the most diverse opinions, love toward friends and foes alike.

If our love will blaze like this, if we will become more experienced in it, if this current of love will draw as many Christians as possible, then, to think of a future when there will be enough love to leaven the whole world is not a utopia, even if it may appear so.

There are, today, half a billion Catholics and about 900 million Christians in the world. If we, as Christians focused our lives on love, which is the synthesis of the Gospel, the world would take a different direction.

We could one day have a greater impact on the relations among nations and even be instrumental in fostering a sharing of goods among them. Many questions which are still unresolved would thus find a solution.

How much land is not cultivated, how many areas of subsoil are still unexplored (as in South America, in Australia, in Africa, for instance), how much work, how much bread there would be for so many!

There is today a great fear of a thoughtless growth of the world population. It is not with artificial methods, however, such as abortion and sterilization, for instance, that a remedy to this problem can be found.

If we Christians commit ourselves to placing value on love, there will be no need to use such systems of birth control, as it is now done in some countries. It is not the principle of life that must die in human beings. It is the "old man" [24] with his selfishness that must be suppressed in our heart, by living a life devoted to love.

Yes, this is the goal we must aim at in order to see the rise of the "civilization of love" which was so close to the heart of Pope Paul VI and is of so much concern to Pope John Paul II. And with a civilization of love a new civilization of life will blossom forth.

But it all depends on us.

St. Catherine of Siena, patron saint of Italy, said: "If you are what you are supposed to be, you will spread fire all over Italy. Don't be content with little things, for God demands great things of you."

How can we put this love into practice?

Our firm conviction, our fight for life may determine the existence of many children in the future. God has his own design, a unique design of love on each one of them.

Let us act in such a way that he may say to us at the end: I was threatened, I was defenseless, I was the least of your brothers and you saved my life. ●

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1) Gen. 3:16; 2) Gen. 3:19; 3) Gen. 4:10,12; 4) Gen. 4:15; 5) Gen. 9:5-6; 6) Dt. 5:16; 7) Wisdom 1:13-14; 8) Ap. 1:17-18; 9) Mt. 16-16; 10) Jn. 11:25; 11) Jn. 14:6; 12) Jn. 3:15; 13) Didache, 5,2; 14) Letter of Barnabas, 19,5; 15) "A Plea regarding Christians," 33,6; 16) Apology, 9,8; 17) Lk. 10:16; 18) Translation from L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, April 21,1981; 19) Jn. 15: 12-13; 20) Lk.6:38; 21) Mt.6:33; 22) Lk. 12:27; 23) Acts 4:32,34; 24)Col. 3:9.

Chiara Lubich visits London

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Runcie, Primate of the Church of England, invited Chiara Lubich to Lambeth Palace on June 10. Before lunch Dr. Runcie had a private conversation with Chiara Lubich during which she gave the Archbishop an outline of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement and its structure, explaining that there were many Anglican members of its various sections. After the meeting Dr. Runcie presented the Cross of the Order of St. Augustine of Canterbury to Chiara in recognition of her service in and for the Anglican Communion.

At lunch the Archbishop was joined by the Bishop of Stepney; Mrs. Margaret Pawley, the wife of Archdeacon Pawley who had arranged this meeting with Dr. Runcie and who was not able to attend the lunch because of ill-health; the Revd. Chartres, the Archbishop's chaplain and Mr. Terry Waites, the Archbishop's representative. Also at the lunch were Miss Eli Folonari, Dr. Gabri Fallacara, Mr. Giuseppe Zanghi, and Miss Mari Ponticaccia and Dr. Dimitri Bregant, who are responsible for the Focolare Movement in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

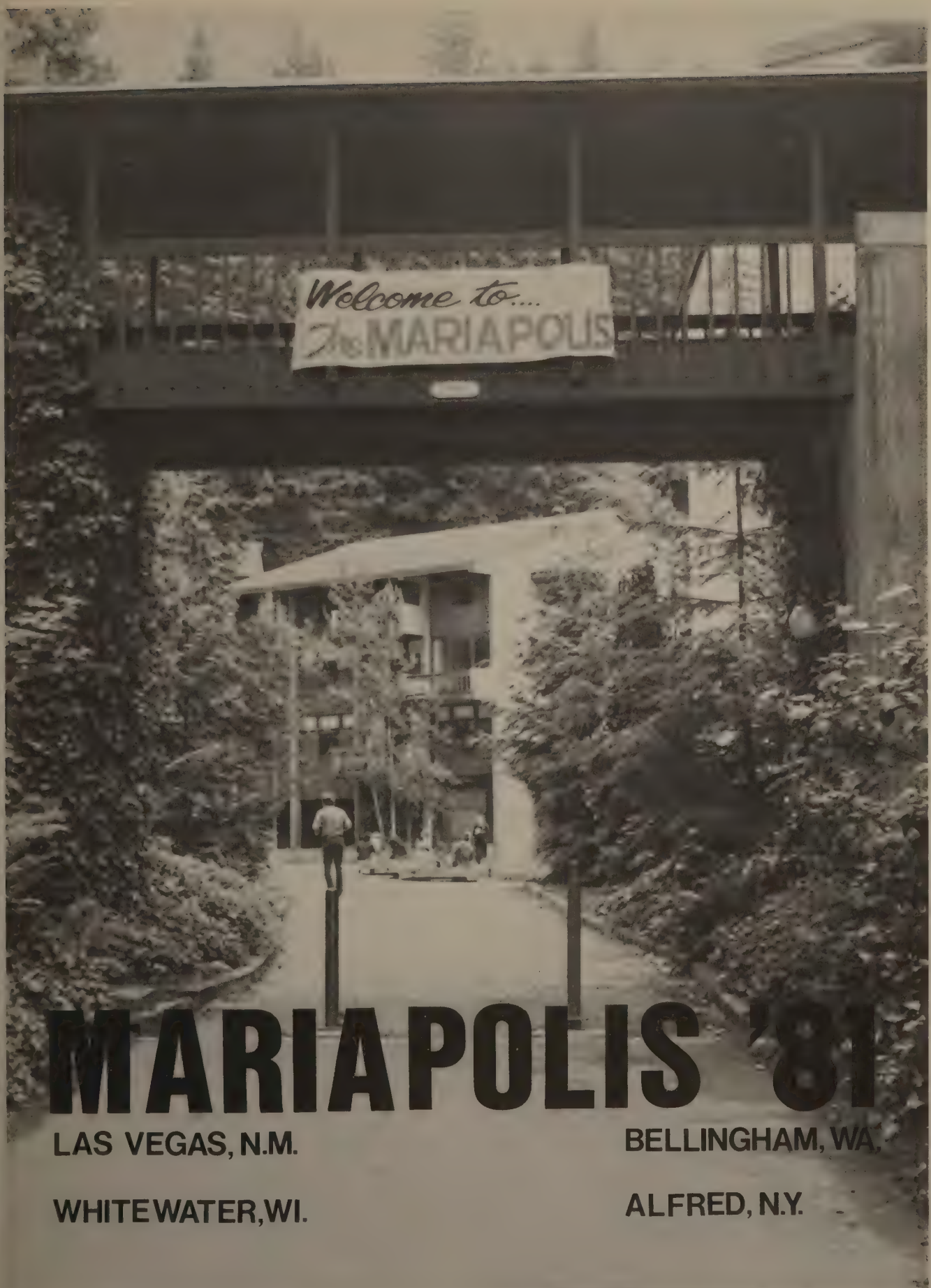
After lunch twelve Anglican members of the Focolare Movement were introduced to the Archbishop who then invited all those present to pray with him in the chapel of Lambeth Palace.

Cardinal George Basil Hume, Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, encouraged Chiara Lubich to continue her work for Christian unity when they met before her visit to Lambeth Palace. The Catholic Bishop of Augsburg, Joseph Stimpfle was also in London at the same time and with Chiara Lubich met five Anglican bishops and was able to share his ecumenical experience in Germany and his appreciation of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement based on his long-standing friendship with the Movement in Germany, where the Ottmaring Ecumenical Center has been established in his diocese.

On Saturday June 13, about 400 members of the Focolare Movement from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland had a meeting to hear news of the visit and to hear answers to questions they had submitted to Chiara Lubich. Bishop Stimpfle preached at the concelebrated mass presided over by Bishop Devine from Glasgow. Bishop Stimpfle also had the opportunity of meeting Bishop McMahon, the bishop of Brentwood, Bishop Henderson, an area bishop of Southwark and Bishop Butler, first bishop in Hertfordshire.

The week's events gave all who were involved a new sense of commitment to the unity of Christians.

In a future issue we will be publishing a full report on this visit.



MARIAPOLIS '81

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The Mariapolis. Many have experienced it. And many more will. A week-long gathering, at the end of which you often feel torn between the desire to remain together in the atmosphere of unity that all have built together, and the push that comes from within to go out and spread this unity to the world around you.

But, what is a Mariapolis? A retreat? A conference? A vacation? A spiritual experience? Perhaps it is all these things and something more.

We read on the invitation: "The Mariapolis is the summer meeting of the Focolare, held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community, a family. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the participants will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according to the Gospel."

That says a lot. And yet when you ask people who have been to a Mariapolis what it was, they usually answer: "It's impossible to describe! You'll have to experience it yourself!"

In 1981 talks and experiences of life focused around one central point: the will of God. The title: "Our Yes to God" — "yes" to his plan of love.

Each day a different aspect of this topic was considered in depth. Following the main talk, people of all different walks of life, ages and vocations shared their experiences of life. Anyone could find him or herself in the situations they spoke of, yet their experiences were also extraordinary because, in their desire to say yes to God and to follow his will, they had found light, peace and, at times, unexpected solutions to seemingly impossible problems.

At the center of each day was the celebration of the Eucharist — a moment to stop and to start again with new strength.

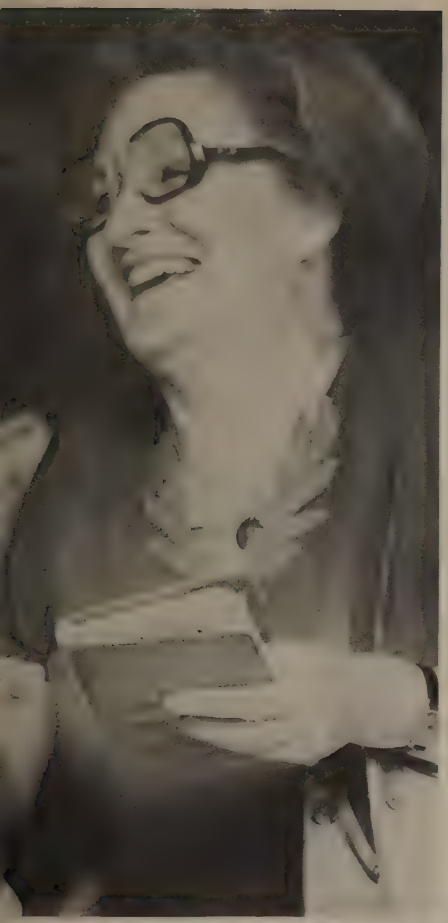
Lunch, followed by a short interval, provided an opportunity for conversation, for sharing, for asking questions. In the afternoon, participants became acquainted with the different branches of the Movement through films, slides, presentations and more experiences of life; they received an updating, as well, on some of the more important events within the Focolare during the past year. There was too little time to share everything, of course, but enough for one to realize that the family of the Movement is truly large, and that all over the world there are people working together in the most diverse environments to help build a society based on the Gospel.

Special programs were held simultaneously for young people of different age groups: the youngest were the Gen 4 boys and girls, who had as their theme, "The Life of Jesus." Then there were the Gen 3, while the older Gen 2 followed the same program as the adults.

As a guideline for each day, a sentence was chosen from the New Testament, a "Word of Life." Sharing groups in the evening gave everyone an opportunity to speak and to relate their experiences on how they had tried to live this sentence during the day.

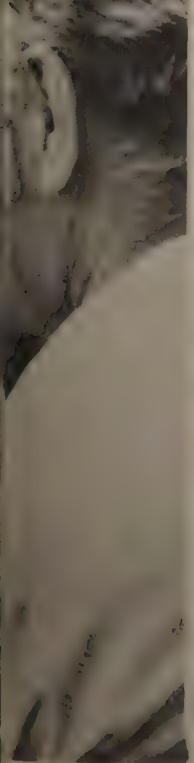
The day closed with Recollection and Benediction, a quiet moment in which to examine the day, give thanks, and ask forgiveness: to end the day all together, and yet, each one alone — as one of the Mariapolis songs says,–before " . ... the one who, at the evening of your life, will look only at your heart."

The Mariapolis. Anyone can experience it. A week-long gathering that can be the starting point for a new way of life.



At the Alfred Mariapolis,
the morning began
on a light note with Radio "M.A.R.I.A.P.O.L.I.S."
bringing the latest, hot-off-the-press
news of the preceding day.
From the news of the other Mariapoli in the world,
to the experiences of the Gen 4;
from birthdays,
to reports on the progress being made in
the Gen workshops;
from the latest statistics
on the total number of participants,
with new arrivals and departures,
to the number of toddlers in the nursery —
the morning news flash
helped to create the
atmosphere of a family.

During the intervals, there was the opportunity to get to know one another, to share experiences and impressions — continuing also here in these moments to build as someone said: "this one family where everyone loves one another." She continued, "I feel that the Mariapolis has the answer to all the social problems of the world: mutual love."



The will of God in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement

In the last issue of Living City *we printed the first part of a talk by Chiara Lubich which spoke of how the concept of the will of God came to light and was understood in the early experiences of the life of the Focolare Movement. Here we are printing the second half of this talk as it was delivered in the Mariapolis.*

God's will was also manifested to us by the Ten Commandments, as well as by the precepts of the Church, by our superiors, and by the duties of our state in life. Even civil laws were an expression of God's will for us, as were life's various circumstances, whether they were joyful, sorrowful, or indifferent.

We had a kind of compass for determining God's will. It was the "voice" within us, the voice of the Holy Spirit. We used to urge one another to listen to "that voice." At that time, for us to speak of a "voice" meant to risk being taken for heretics. And it was equally difficult for us as lay people to speak about the Gospel or about love.

We got used to listening to "that voice" in order to know God's will. Later on, in the light of this experience, we understood that one of the reasons why God had created the Focolare was that the presence of Jesus in our midst in the Focolare was like a loud speaker that amplified God's voice within each one of us, enabling us to hear it more clearly. We often say that in the Focolare we live between two "fires": God within us and God in our midst. Here in this divine "furnace" we are formed and trained to listen to Jesus and to follow him. We are encouraged by the fact that St. Paul himself is clearly of the opinion that in order to understand God's will, a person should be part of a Christian community where Christ is alive and present (see Phil. 1:9-10).

At the beginning of the Movement we were in constant danger of losing our lives, because we were not adequately sheltered during the air raids. So when the question arose as to when we had to do God's will in order to love him, we immediately understood that the answer was: now — right now. For we did not know if we would still be alive later.

The only time in our possession was the present moment. The past was already gone, and we did not know if the future would ever come. We used to say: "The past no longer exists; let's entrust it to God's mercy. The future is not yet here. By living the present, we will also live the future well when it becomes the present."

We realized how foolish it was to live in the past, which will never return, or in the future, which may never come and which, in any case, is unpredictable.

We took the example of riding on a train. Just as a traveler remains seated and would not think of walking up and down the aisle in order to get to the destination sooner, so we had to remain in the present. The train of time moves ahead on its own.

Living the present, one moment after another, we will one day reach that decisive moment upon which our eternity depends. Having loved God's will in the present with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, we will have fulfilled, throughout our lives, the commandment to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

Employing a distinction used at the time, we noted the difference bebetween the divine will already "signified" for us and the divine will of God's "good pleasure" not yet manifested to us, in other words, between what we might call God's "expressed" will and his "unforeseen" will. God's expressed will included all that we *knew* we had to abide by: the Commandments, the Word of God, the precepts of the Church, the duties of our state in life, etc. God's "good pleasure," on the other hand, referred to the various unforeseen aspects of his will which are made manifest to us through events and circumstances, such as an unexpected encounter, a fortunate occurrence, a tragedy, a new situation, etc.

We tried to carry out the expressed will of God as perfectly as possible, while maintaining the flexibility necessary in order to be able to change our course of action as soon as circumstances revealed that God wanted something different from us.

Among the first members of the Movement some were inclined to be more attentive to one or the other of these expressions of God's will. We noted the positive and negative aspects of both attitudes, and we concluded that perfection consisted in being able to grasp

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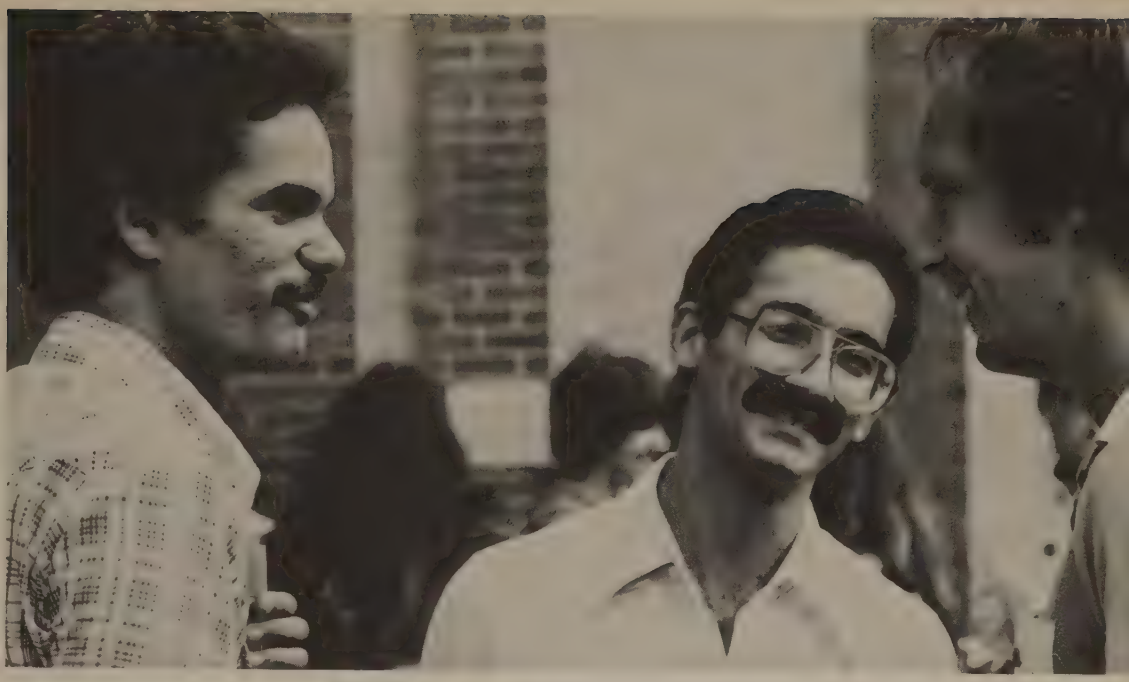


There were simultaneous translations into one, two or three languages, at the Mariapolis. A large group from Puerto Rico participated also this year in the East Coast Mariapolis.

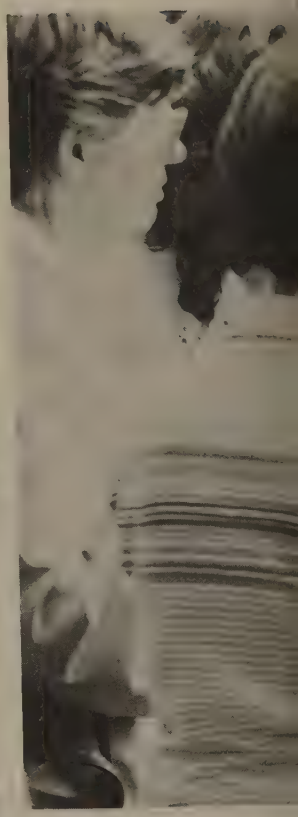
IMPRESSIONS . . . .

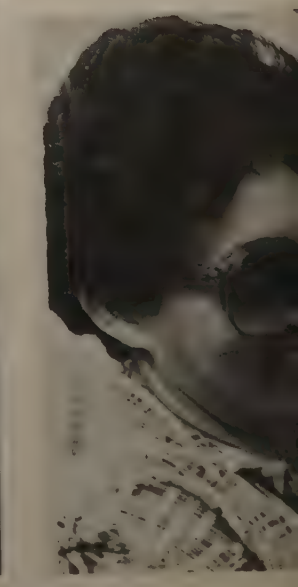
"I look at the life proposed here at the Mariapolis like a thread that can be brought into every faction of our life, and to all the people we know. In our family, we've always been searching for something; this week has brought us to a kind of summit of what we were looking for."

"I am a United Methodist and therefore I appreciate the emphasis on unity and divine love in the Movement. One of the things I learned here is to do the Will of God in each moment. I think I will take this concept home with me and be able to do His Will more fully in the future with my family and friends."

"We came to be here principally through keeping in touch with the Movement through Living City. *At home I've been attempting to create a better atmosphere at the place where I work, and* Living City *has helped me over the last couple of years. I thought therefore, I could learn more about how to love and be more loving by coming to the Mariapolis. Returning home now, we want to go ahead with the others in the Movement, doing even more to spread this life."*

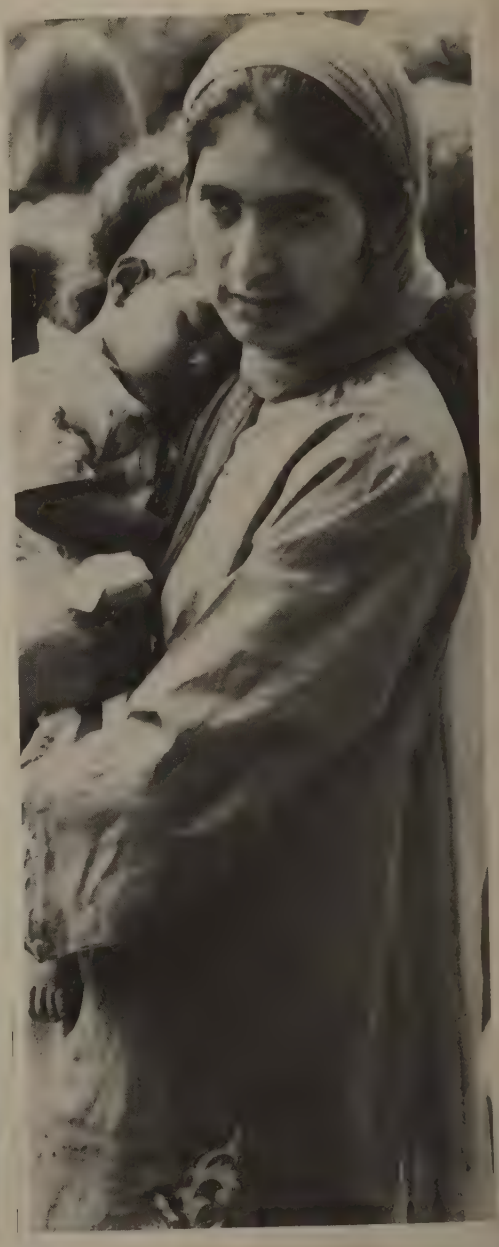
FACES





THE MARIAPOLIS

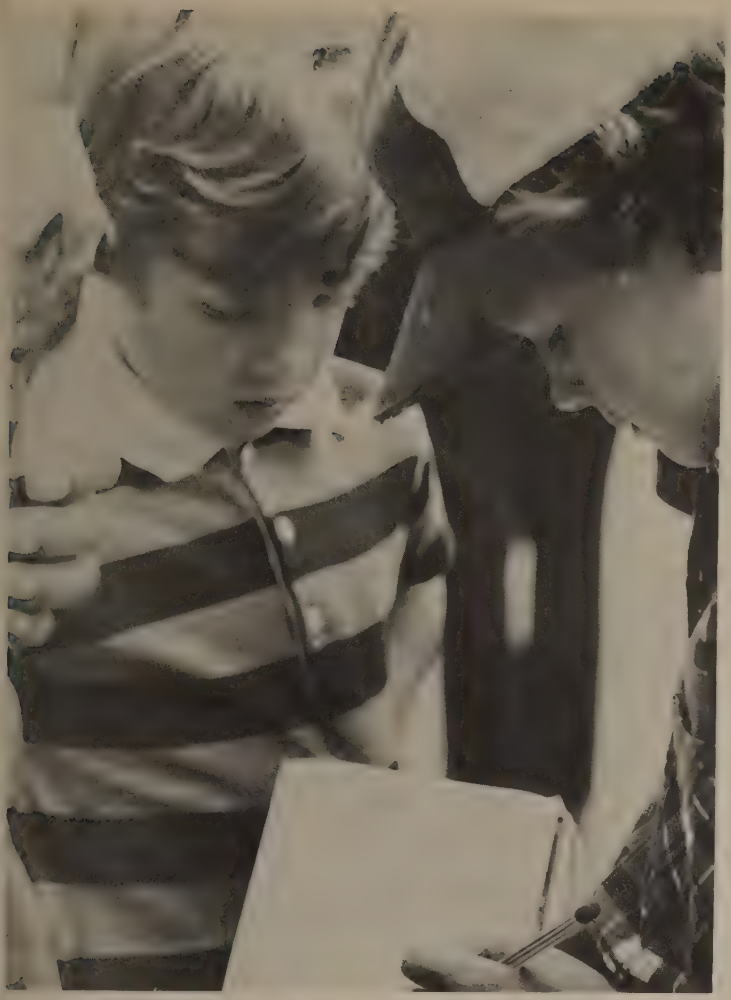
"The Mariapolis is a ray of hope for the world."

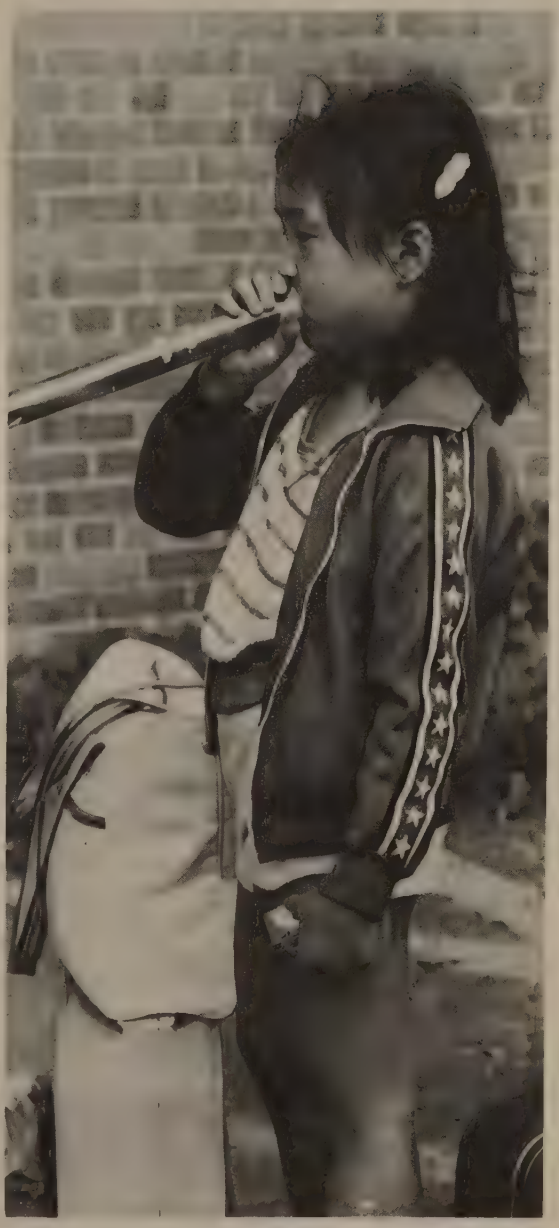


At the Midwest Mariapolis, also an Episcopal Liturgy was celebrated daily. Fr. Tyler Strand, Episcopal priest of Whitewater, shared at the end of the week: "The thing that struck me most in the Focolare is its simplicity, and the avoidance of emotionalism which would be to the detriment of appreciating the difficulties involved in living the Gospel. I am also impressed with the honesty with which the Movement approaches the differences between our Churches — for example, the fact that we aren't able to share the Eucharist. I like this kind of approach that says that there are differences, but let us find what we have in common, and let us live the Gospel as well as we can with our limitations. I like that because it makes me feel more and more eager to eliminate the differences, but it also makes me appreciate the things we already have in common."

There was an afternoon of games in each of the four Mariapoli. It was an occasion for everyone to relax.

DEPARTURES





IMPRESSIONS . . . . .

"The Mariapolis was a truly liberating experience. I began to think less of myself, and see and listen to the others. The joy and love in this family is authentic, 'practical,' and God-given. I feel I have seen a city of people who delight in their God."

"I understood that although I have been doing a lot of nice things for a lot people, I haven't been doing God's will — I've been doing my will. Today I'm starting all over in a 'new life,' saying yes to God and not to myself."

"This has been a beautiful Mariapolis where I have experienced strongly how the will of God is God's love for me. It has also been the discovery of how fulfilling living God's will is. By trying to do this, I realized how much more strength and energy I have than I ordinarily utilize."

"The beautiful thing about the Mariapolis and the life of unity is its simplicity. Following step-wise everything that I have learned here during this week, life can be beautiful. As I'm leaving, I can't help wishing that we had fifty-one more weeks like this!"

"The Mariapolis has shown me a new way of life — very beautiful and different; a way that is hard, but worth it!"

(continued from page 12)

what God wanted in the present moment, and doing it.

Those who were more inclined to carry out the expressed will of God, and less concerned with the unforeseen aspects of his will, tended not to notice when circumstances indicated a new course of God's will, and consequently they tended to have a less intimate relationship with him, not giving themselves to him with all their heart. So although they believed they were devoted to their duties, they were, in fact, devoted to themselves!

On the other hand, those who were more inclined to do God's will as manifested by circumstances had a greater appreciation of the "poetry" of the Gospel, and found it easier to see the "golden thread" of God's providence running through everything that happened. At times, however, aided by their imagination, they thought they saw God everywhere; and they presented the life of the Gospel in a way which was too adventurous and romantic. By so doing, they deprived the Gospel life of its most beautiful characteristic: the *normality* of a life that is supernatural, but simple; neither artificial nor excessive, but pure and harmonious — as nature is, as Mary is.

Consequently, we made a determined effort to become more and more adept at perceiving God's plan for each one of us in every present moment, and to truly *be* what he wanted of us, in each moment.

To illustrate how we wanted to live, we used the image of the sun with its rays. The sun was God, the rays his will. Each one of us, in each present moment of our life, had a ray of the sun to walk in, that is, God's will for him or her. Each person's ray was distinct from the others; yet all were rays of the sun, all were God's will. Therefore, all of us were doing only one will — God's will — but it was different for each person. Because of this one will — which bound us to one another, to Jesus, and to the Father — each one of us felt that he or she was one with each of the others, with Jesus, and with the Father.

As the rays of the sun are *one* with the sun, similarly, God's will coincides with God. Thus, by loving his will, we were loving him.

We had to follow our ray: always walking in it, always being enlightened by it — remaining constantly in God's will. To do this successfully, we needed to use violence at times in order to silence our own will and to hold fast to his, which is, after all, the expression of his love for us.

When we succeeded in doing his divine will consistently in many successive present moments, we experienced that his yoke was light and easy (Mt. 11:29).

Everything in our lives changed. For example, our relationships with others: previously we used to associate with people we liked, and we loved those whom we found pleasant. But now we were happy to seek the company of whomever God willed us to be with, and we would stay with them for as long as he willed it.

The fact that we were completely intent upon doing God's will in each present moment led to our being detached from everything else, and from ourselves as well. This detachment was not something deliberately sought after — we sought God alone. It simply came as a consequence, because two things could not occupy our attention at the same time. Where there was the divine will, there was no room for ours. In the present moment we could not do two things at once. So rather than labor to eradicate our own will, we worked to acquire the divine will.

Whenever we realized that we had "gone out of our ray," as we used to say, into the darkness, and had spent a few moments doing our own will and letting our old self (cf. Ep.4:22) live, we knew the only way to improve the situation was to start doing the divine will of that present moment. Since we had not loved God in those previous moments, we had to love him at least in that present moment.

We felt that with each passing moment of each new day, we were adding stitches to a magnificent embroidery. Those moments which we had not spent "in our ray" were entrusted to God's mercy. To us, looking from below — from the underside of the embroidery, as it were — those moments seemed like so many knots in the threads. But we knew that this was simply our human way of looking at things. We were certain that God's love mends every tear and binds every broken thread. And so we knew that, seen right side up — from God's vantage point — the design would turn out perfectly. And from heaven our lives would be seen as the wonderful stories of true children of God.

We liked very much something St. Francis de Sales had said about the relationship between Christians and God's will. It could be paraphrased in this manner: "True Christians will carry this name engraved in their hearts: 'I am God's will for me.' "[1]

Everything that God asked of us was love. In each moment he came to us in his will; and whether this appeared beautiful or sad to us, it was nonetheless he himself coming to us with his love.

But how were we to consider the things he merely allowed to happen? What about our mistakes, our weaknesses? From the very beginning, Catherine of Siena was an encouragement to us in this regard, with her statement, "All that God wills or permits is for our sanctification."[2]

So we knew we should never let anything stop us. If we made a mistake, we could not let it get us down. Whatever happened, if entrusted to God's mercy, would not only cease to be useless or harmful, but would help us to acquire humility, which is the foundation for sanctity.

In fact, Scripture says, "God makes all things work together for the good of those who love him" (Rom. 8:28). We had wanted to love God, and we discovered that, as a result, everything that happened in life would contribute to our personal spiritual growth.

As we strove to do God's will, the Holy Spirit soon taught us that it was good to do the good that God wanted, but it was bad to do the good that God did not want. This understanding made our new life even more dynamic.

Doing God's will with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our strength brought us great

1) Treatise on the Love of God, VIII,7; 2) Letter 5, in Epistolario.

peace and deep joy — peace and joy that the world cannot give but that only God can bestow.

Outside of God's will we found no light, no love, no peace — only torment.

Thus we learned to distinguish between natural and supernatural life and God's grace, but we had not done enough to make this divine life bear fruit. Even though we were baptized we practically lived like pagans, because our hearts and minds were attached to many things instead of to God alone.

In living according to God's will we also came to a deeper understanding of Mary. We admired her as the most perfect creature who had ever lived on this earth, because she had done only God's will.

Therefore, if doing God's will meant "to live as Jesus," it also meant "to live like Mary": this was the best way to show our devotion to her and to be her children. We took as our own her words, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk 1:38).

But this effort to do God's will always, moment by moment, brought about another effect in our lives. Since in doing his will we were loving him, and he manifests himself to those who love him (Jn. 14: 21), he manifested himself to us.

From the very beginning, and continuing down through the years to the present, the Holy Spirit has been gradually revealing to us the splendid plan God had for each one of us and for our group.

This divine plan has brought a new movement to life in the Church: a movement beautiful beyond words; sacred, like all that is both human and divine; alive, like the body of Christ, of which it is an expression; and rich — infinitely rich — because it was designed in heaven. And urged on by its divine architect, the Movement is intent upon resolving — together with other Christian movements — the most significant problems facing humanity today.

The Church has studied the Movement, has blessed it and approved it, and has confirmed its life as being God's will for all who belong to it and all whom God will call to be part of it in the future.

CHIARA LUBICH

WORD OF LIFE

"Not seven times,

I tell you,

but seventy times

seven times."

(Mt. 18:22)

"Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy times seven times" (Mt. 18:22).

Do you remember to whom Jesus addressed these words? It was to Peter who, after listening to the marvelous things Jesus was saying, put this question to him: "Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?" Jesus replied,

"Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy times seven times."

Most likely, Peter had been deeply struck by the Lord's preaching, and being a good and generous person, he had decided to throw himself into the new course of action which Jesus was advocating. He was ready to do something he thought exceptional for him, to forgive even seven times.

But by responding, "seventy times seven times," Jesus is saying that the kind of forgiveness he wants has no limits. We must forgive always.

"Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy times seven times."

This phrase calls to mind the biblical song of Lamech, a descendent of Adam: "Sevenfold vengeance is taken for Cain, but seventy-seven fold for Lamech" (Gen. 4:24). Thus hatred began to spread among the people of the world, swelling like a river at flood time into an evergrowing sea of hate.

Against this spreading of evil, Jesus proposes an unlimited and unconditional forgiveness that is capable of breaking the vicious circle of violence.

Only forgiveness can stem this tide of ill will and offer the human race a future that promises something other than self-destruction.

"Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy times seven times."

We need to forgive, to forgive always. Forgiving is not the same as forgetting, which merely indicates a reluctance to face the situation. Nor is forgiveness a sign of weakness; it does not mean ignoring a wrong which we might have suffered, simply out of fear of the stronger person who committed it. Forgiveness does not consist in calling what is serious, trivial, or what is evil, good. Forgiveness is not indifference. Forgiveness is a conscious act of the will, and therefore a free act. It consists in accepting our neighbors as they are, notwithstanding the wrong done to us, just as God accepts us sinners, notwithstanding our faults. Forgiveness consists in not returning an offense with another, but in doing what St. Paul tells us: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Forgiveness consists in offering the one who has wronged you the opportunity to have a new rela-

tionship with you. It makes it possible for both of you to start life over again, and to experience a future in which evil will not have the last word.

"Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy times seven times."

You might wonder how you should live these words.

They are Jesus' answer to Peter's question: "How often must I forgive my brother?" Peter speaks of "my brother." When answering him, then, Jesus had in mind above all the relationships among Christians, among members of the same community.

Therefore, you must act in this way first of all toward those who share your faith — in your family or community, if you belong to one, at work, at school.

You know that someone who is offended is often tempted to respond with a similar word or act. And you know that even persons who live in the same household often hurt one another because of differences in personality, nervous tension, or other causes. Therefore, you must never forget that only a constantly renewed attitude of forgiveness can maintain peace and unity.

You will always be tempted to think of the others' imperfections, to remember their past, to wish that they were different than they are. But you need to acquire the habit of looking at them with new eyes, and seeing them as new persons, always accepting them immediately and without reservation, even if they do not repent.

You may say, "But this is hard!" And you are right. Christianity is beautiful, but challenging. In fact, you are following a God who, as he was dying on the cross, asked his Father to forgive those who had caused his death.

Take courage. Begin to live like this. I assure you that you will find a peace you have never before experienced, and a joy you have never known.

CHIARA LUBICH

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Gospel.

400 Blouses to Unsew

I work in a large clothing factory where incidents of injustice are frequent occurrences, resulting in feelings of resentment and gossip among the employees. There are five of us in my department and our job consists in preparing work for about 200 laborers who operate different machines. We try to help one another in our small group and to create an atmosphere of collaboration. The job in itself isn't difficult, although it does require a lot of attention since there are many small things to remember and at times one of us makes a mistake.

One day, not too long ago, around noontime we saw our department foreman approaching our work area together with the big boss. We could tell from the expression on their faces that something had gone wrong, and each of us got ready to be the one who had made the mistake.

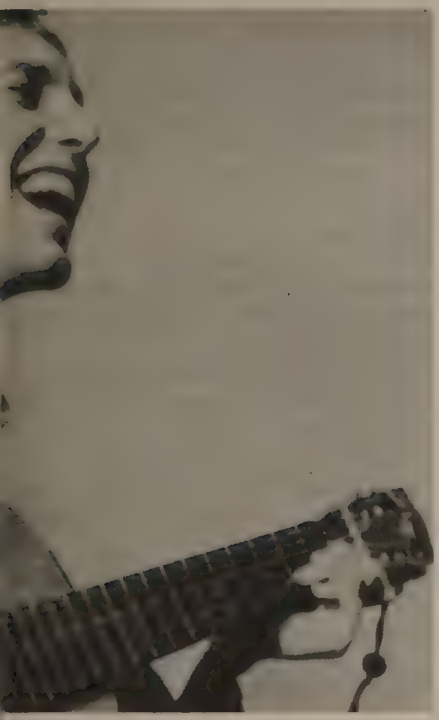
That time it was one of the other girls — she had put the wrong labels on a large number of blouses. After having reprimanded her, the boss added that she would not be paid for the hours it would take her to correct the error. A short while later he called her into his office to tell her she was fired.

The following day it was my turn. The boss came over and, using the same tone of voice as he had with my colleague, he told me that I would not receive one penny for the time needed to undo the mistake that had been made. I realized immediately that it would take me a long time, and, for a moment, I felt like rebelling and telling him that he was being unfair — in fact, the fault had not been entirely mine!

Then I remembered the word of life for that month: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." How could I live it? I began by listening to him without rebelling, maintaining an inner peace. I tried to explain calmly to him what had happened but he didn't want to listen to me. I realized then that if I wanted to build peace I couldn't try to defend myself, but rather accept with love something that to me seemed unjust. I went without a word to the area they had assigned to me and I began to work. Many people walked by and asked me why I was there, unsewing 400 blouses. The word of life kept me on the right track and I understood that being a "peacemaker" meant not losing time in empty chatter. Each person who passed by and asked me what I was doing was giving me the possibility to answer with love and not with resentment, reminding me that every stitch I took took out had value if I did it out of love. I experienced a new peace growing not only within me, but also around me.

It took me almost all day to finish the job and when I went to the boss to report that everything was back in order again, I had such a peace inside that it seemed to be the right moment to ask him for the raise that had been due me for some time. He kind of half-smiled and answered, "Of course."

J.D.



VIR: "I live to meet him."

I LIVE TO MEET HIM

Stories of three young people as they faced death, and the effect this had on their friends. All three were members of Gen (New Generation Movement).

FERNANDO FROM SPAIN

Fernando had leukemia for over 13 years and he already knew about it when he first met the Gen in 1971. He said at that time: "To love my illness is to love what Jesus has sent me . . . even to love being on an I.V. drip night and day."

Then for several years the sickness seemed to be arrested, but even this was a difficult period for Fernando because his life of unity with the other Gen was weak. During this period he got married and by the time the disease returned in a more malevolent form he already had two children.

Fernando began to meet with the Gen again and, realizing what was important in his life, he reestablished his relationship with Jesus. He wrote: "I had managed to become a Gen, then as my health improved I wanted to enjoy my life . . . I was rich, I had a a house, a car, everything, but in reality I had nothing because I didn't love anyone, not even God . . . Jesus makes us realize what is really important in life through suffering. But God is love and so the sufferings of the body are not really important compared to the love of Jesus and the love we can give him in return by knowing how to accept what he sends us."

He once wrote to the Gen: "What is important is not whether I can sleep tonight but that unity be accomplished. We should be a unified block and Jesus should be in our midst building it.

Fernando told his experience at a day meeting in Lisbon in April 1980 . "I do not know how long I still have to live — 5 days? 20 days? But, while I still have the strength, I want to tell you that I can feel in my heart that God loves me. God loves us. Understand that these are not just words for me. God is love! What matters in life is to love. . . ." There were about 1000 people seated in the hall and at the end of his talk they just rose to their feet, without applauding, deeply moved.

Fernando was concerned about his wife and children right to the end. At one point he even sent them away to the seaside for a rest.

Just before his death early last August he wrote, "Today I feel I am ready to go whenever he calls."

ALBERTO FROM GENOA, ITALY

Alberto and Carlo belonged to a Gen unit in Genoa.

After the Mariapolis[1] Alberto went on vacation in the mountains with some other Gen and the unity among them grew.

One evening before going to sleep in their tent they read a meditation, 'The Final Exam'[2] written by Chiara Lubich. Then, as usual, they prayed for fine weather for the following day.

Next morning they started to climb a rock face and everything was going well, until, crossing the last part of a glacier, Alberto lost his foothold, started to slide, and fell 1,500 feet into a gulley. In his knapsack was the book with the meditation they had read the night before.

Alberto had come to know the Focolare Movement through his parish priest who persuaded him to visit the Focolare Center. Here he experienced unity and he wrote: "I am very happy. I often go to the Focolare and I know everyone there. They teach me the reality of Jesus Forsaken.[3] I begin to understand things I have always known but it is like listening to the same record, first on an old record player, and then on a hi-fi system with 100 watt output."

Alberto wrote in his diary about his early days as a Gen: "God is love and he calls me, Alberto, to join in his revolution, and he destroys my peaceful life."

He described at a Gen Congress how he had realized the importance of loving in all the small events of each moment and putting into practice the Gospel phrase: "We have passed from death to life because we have loved our brothers"—"Leave your place in the team for someone who hasn't played. Hold the door open for someone who is coming in. Pour out the drinks at the table. Offer change to someone who is making a telephone call. . . As we do these things a new reality comes into existence."

His new life transformed his relationship with his girl friend. "What does God want of me? A family, perhaps, or has he some other plan? I don't know," he wrote, "but we must both be open, as God has a plan for both of us." His other friends found it was easy to discuss problems such as money ones with him because his gift for making unity brought out the best in everyone. One day after looking at the details of a delicate financial situation with one of the Gen, even he was astonished as they felt the peace and certainty that, He who clothes the flowers of the field better than Solomon, will never abandon His children.

Another Gen was able to come to a decision about smoking, through Alberto's way of living totally in the present moment, in the presence of Jesus.

He described the unity of the Gen: "the most wonderful thing of all is when we meet with Jesus in the midst[4] and are able to love each other, beyond all our mistakes — mine and theirs."

In another letter Alberto wrote: "I am realizing that my life as a Gen means above all, a total conversion to Jesus who is asking me for purity and to love him in his abandonment." He continually had to make new starts. As he wrote one day in church ". . . today things are going badly so I have come here, to His house to start again. I have so many things to tell him. . . "

One of the Gen was very impressed by Alberto's love for Mary ". . . with just a few words he implanted in me a new love for her as he told us how he felt that she really was his mother. This is probably Alberto's greatest gift to me."

Slowly the roots went deeper. In a letter he said: "Jesus has called me to his way — along the road he has designed for me. I know I shall not be alone any more. When I make mistakes and betray my 'yes' a thousand times, he will be there in that failure, sorrow, abandonment, or sin and in all my crises. Often now my will says 'yes' out of love and then there is a joyful union with him in the most unexpected ways, perhaps on the bus, or a moment in church at the daily Eucharist."

His life was full, with studies, people to be met, Gen activities such as preparations for the Genfest. A life not lacking in difficulties and sorrows, through which his relationship with Jesus grew in depth. ". . . when I speak of Jesus Forsaken I am afraid, sometimes, that I am loving him to calm myself, using a 'formula.' I must really live this moment and hang on, because I never succeed in living moments like these well. I value your love for me just as I am, full of doubts, thoughts of pride, falsehood or fears. You love me Jesus, and I will never leave you." He wrote in a letter to his friend Carlo ". . . we mustn't stop loving, loving everyone, ready to burst our hearts with true love born out of suffering. I know my weaknesses and yours, and perhaps even today we shall fall, but he asks us both to continue to love." This was his secret.

CARLO FROM GENOA, ITALY

Carlo was also a Gen aged 20, and a close friend of Alberto. He was also known as 'Vir,' the 'strong man,' but at the time Alberto died Carlo was lying in the hospital. On the day of his operation a postcard wishing him well, arrived from Alberto who was in the mountains.

Medical examinations showed that Carlo had a serious tumor of the most malignant type. He did not know the result of this examination, and after the operation he appeared quite well, joking with his visitors and playing the guitar for the other patients. Then on Wednesday, September 3, his condition deteriorated and he was transferred immediately to intensive care. His Gen friends sang beneath his window but only his mother was allowed a brief visit. The Gen 3[5] sent him a large colorful drawing which was hung up in his room — he had been their assistant for a long time. On the picture was written: "We come to you, to meet Jesus together. Your Gen 3." One day, they brought him a large fruit cake but he sent it to the Focolare as he was unable to eat it.

One of the Gen 3 sent him a message: "Ciao! I should like to see you. Perhaps if you ask for me they will let me in. I want to tell you so much."

After a slight improvement in his condition this Gen 3 was one of his first visitors. They were alone, and the Gen recounted later. "Carlo called for me while I was with some friends. As I went into his room it was like seeing Jesus on the cross. He had a tube in the arm and a rosary in his fingers. I felt, as he seized my hand, that I should be giving him courage, but it was the other way around. He asked how the Gen 3 were; then we were silent, but we continued to converse through glances. I felt he understood me because he was no longer of this world — he was already living with God." He established a wonderful relationship with the doctors and nurses of the intensive care unit, most of whom were far away from God, and he used the opportunity of a 'Gen Rosso'[6] concert at Genoa to sell them tickets. To one nurse he said, "I know where I am going. Two weeks ago one of my friends died in a mountain accident." After this he talked about Alberto.

Finally, he left the intensive care unit and he had moments when he knew he was dying and felt such a great joy and peace that he was able to say, "It is wonderful to die." Then he went through a period when those

graces seemed to disappear: "I am afraid to die," he confided to some one.

Together, they prayed for the strength to live the present moment well. The following day the hemorrhaging began again and as his physical sufferings increased his interior suffering also persisted. He told his mother, "I no longer feel Jesus near me." And she helped him to repeat a phrase from a meditation by Chiara Lubich: "I love you because you have entered my life when no one else could help me."

Alberto's parents were allowed to visit one day. In spite of his sufferings Carlo became radiant and said: "I have always felt that Alberto was with me." The Gen sent him a card with some words by Chiara Lubich "... I live to meet Him ..." which was hung above his bed.

He knew that his departure must be near, and he said good-bye to his parents, his brothers and sister. Then he asked for a girl he had a special affection for and told her: "I didn't ask for you before because I wanted this to be a special meeting as I want my illness to belong entirely to God ... Pray for this."

The girl asked to see him again a few days later. She told him: "I love you now in a different way, I am even ready to cut the last thread that holds us together, because you belong entirely to God."

A priest celebrated Mass for him and he received Communion for the last time. A Focolarino[7] told him: "Carlo, I know that God loves you so much, that He must take you soon."

Carlo was silent for a moment before he said: "I want to belong totally to God."

"Do you know what that means?"

"Yes, I know."

"Let's entrust everything to Mary, she will carry your wish to its destination."

On September 20 he summoned up all his strength to write to Chiara.

"Ciao, Chiara! I live to meet Him."

Chiara replied at once by telegram:

"Dearest Vir, when you meet Him, greet Him with love from all the

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FAMILY LIFE

WHEN GOD ENTERS A LIFE

In order to explain the experience I want to relate, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of my marriage. I had made my husband the center of my life and had expected him to fulfill all my needs. This is what I thought would make me happy.

Years later, as my husband was establishing his new business and I was at home raising our three children, a distance began to grow between us. He worked long hours and I became lonely and angry. Our arguments became frequent and more bitter. It became obvious that he was avoiding me, making excuses not to come home. Not long after, he admitted he was involved with another woman.

The days and nights that followed were pure anguish for me. I still loved my husband and the feelings of rejection and abandonment were so deep and painful that at times I could actually feel a physical ache in my heart.

Not long after, we lost our home, when his business failed. He began to work in a night club. We were hardly seeing each other at all at this point. It seemed the only way out was separation and eventually divorce.

I see now that because everything was being taken away from me, in my loneliness and helplessness I began to turn to God. In all that darkness I still trusted and hoped in him. I felt the desire to be close to him and I began to pray. In spite of all the fears and confusion in my heart, little by little I understood that the love between George and I was still alive; it was like a tiny spark buried deeply inside, under the walls we had built. Neither one of us knew how to uncover it. So in my helplessness, I continued to pray and trust, even though I did not understand how it would end.

God answered my prayers by means of people and events. He touched our family with his great love and led us to become acquainted with people who had given God the first place in their lives.

It did not happen overnight, but slowly things changed for our family. Surrounded by the love of others we came to a deeper, a newer love for one another. I remember the year we went to our first Mariapolis. I felt such hope in my heart at that time. God had not only saved our family, but he had also changed me personally. Instead of expecting to be loved now I had a great desire to love and to be love for others.

The occasion to test this new attitude, however, presented itself in a way I would never have imagined. We were spending a quiet day at home when we received an unexpected telephone call. It was "that" woman asking for my husband. She was desperate — she told him — for help. She had now become a prostitute; all her friends had left her, and she was totally alone.

George answered her that he was no longer the same person she had once known. Now God had entered his life and the life of his family: any decision to help her would be made together with me. After George related to me the entire conversation, contrasting sentiments took hold of me. That woman had been my enemy for a long time, and the cause of a lot of

(continued on page 28)

CELEBRATE WITH US

20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA

Special Events

NEW YORK CITY

SATURDAY November 21, 1981	ANNIVERSARY MASS	St. Patrick's Cathedral 5th Ave. at 50th Street MUSIC BY GEN VERDE	3:00 p.m.
	HOSPITALITY BUFFET DINNER	St. Vincent Ferrer Parish Hall Lexington Ave. at 66th Street – US$8.00 –	5:00 p.m.
	COMMEMORATIVE FUNCTION	St. Patrick's Cathedral MUSIC BY GEN VERDE	7:00 p.m.
SUNDAY November 22, 1981	MUSIC FOR UNITY AND PEACE	CONCERT BY GEN VERDE Hunter College, Assembly Hall 695 Park Ave. (entrance on 69th St.) – US$10.00 –	3:00 p.m.

CHICAGO

SUNDAY December 6, 1981	MUSIC FOR UNITY AND PEACE	GEN VERDE MATINEE CONCERT especially for youth Drury Lane Theatre at Water Tower Place – US$6.00 (students) – – US$10.00 (adults) –	2:00 p.m.
	HOSPITALITY BUFFET DINNER	For information contact the Chicago Focolare Centers	
	MUSIC FOR UNITY AND PEACE	GEN VERDE EVENING CONCERT Drury Lane Theatre – US$10.00 –	7:00 p.m.
	RECEPTION	MEET WITH GEN VERDE John Hancock – The 95th – – US$10.00 (limited tickets) –	9:00 p.m.
MONDAY December 7, 1981	OPEN HOUSE	Focolare Center 4822 S. Ellis GEN VERDE WILL BE PRESENT	6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Liturgy at 8:00 p.m.

Seating is limited. Send for tickets for the different events, together with your check or money order (if applicable) for the proper amount, made out to the FOCOLARE MOVEMENT, to: FOCOLARE MOVEMENT – 20th ANNIVERSARY, P.O. Box 496 NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 or FOCOLARE MOVEMENT – 20th ANNIVERSARY, P.O. Box 53426 CHICAGO, IL, 60653.
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GEN VERDE is an international musical group of the Focolare Movement, composed of nineteen "focolarine" from twelve different countries who share the experience of their life through their original music.

YOUTH AND THE GOSPEL

(continued from page 25)

Work of Mary,[8] and ask Him to let me join you one day. Greet Mary, His mother and our mother also. I am always with you keeping Jesus in our midst. Your, Chiara."

Carlo was serene as he looked at the telegram from Chiara. "I am no longer afraid." Then he looked again and said, "But when, when?"

Beneath his hospital window, in spite of the regulations, the Gen sang. Carlo was pleased and sent them some sweets. He chose the last song himself, "The Ray of Your Adventure."

Chiara wrote in her diary: "Carlo, a Gen from Genoa, who is dying of cancer, has gathered strength and sent me this little note. I am told that when Carlo went into the hospital he was simply a twenty year old Gen — now he is a focolarino speaking and acting with the strength of a patriarch. Suffering and the nearness of death have changed him. This is why Jesus puts so much value on suffering and the saints advise us to remember our real destiny. In my reply to Carlo I asked him to take the hearts of all the members of the Focolare Movement, and mine as a gift to Jesus."

On September 29 Chiara went to the Gen school, and the Gen boys and girls signed a pact of mutual love. It was also the day that Carlo died. One of the Gen wrote, "In making the pact I felt Carlo's presence and I felt a direct relationship with him. . . "

Chiara wrote in her diary that day: "Carlo went to Heaven today. Before he died, he read my telegram and, gathering all his strength he put it on his heart and murmured his thanks. All our love, the love of all the hearts of the Focolare Movement was then carried as a gift to Jesus and Carlo was our ambassador. We must pray for him, but also pray to him for us."

1) Mariapolis: Annual summer meetings of the Focolare Movement which take place all over the world.
2) Meditations by Chiara Lubich, p.90.
3) Jesus Forsaken refers to: Mt.27:46.
4) cf. Mt.18,20.
5) Gen 3: see inside back cover.
6) 'Gen Rosso' — international musical group of the Focolare Movement.
7) Focolarino: see inside back cover.
8) Work of Mary: the official title of the Focolare Movement.

NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW! NEW!

A new LP by

GEN ORANGE

The Gen Orange is one of the singing groups of the Gen Movement, the youth of the worldwide Focolare Movement founded by Chiara Lubich in Trent, Italy in 1943. The aim of the Focolare Movement is to work for unity in order to give its contribution toward the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer to his Father, "May they all be one."

To order your album, write to:
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suffering and humiliation. This phone call was now reawakening painful memories and filling me with great anguish. Yet I knew that also in this moment I had to love, for this is the will of God, and to forgive.

I offered to assist George in helping her. George, sensing my fear that he contact her again, suggested that I call her to tell her. I knew that my speaking with her personally would have humiliated her, so I said no. George told me later that when he spoke with her and told her that we would help in any way possible, she said that besides her mother we were the only people who would help her.

The whole experience was beautiful for me. My "hundredfold" was the new freedom I came to possess: freedom from myself, from my fears, my bitterness — and joy: the joy to have had the opportunity to live Jesus' words, "love your enemy."

CAROL

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, th a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total struction of World War II, that God is the only one worth ing for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of eir lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all ay be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, d that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17:). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spon- neously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the ocolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing e Gospel into modern life.

HO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word ire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called ocolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among emselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a y. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, d obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular bs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their milies, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's ocolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same ity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

HE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," ould like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel irit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their pro- ssions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women ho are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then ing new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, c.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead the realization of new structures of society.

HE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, omen, and young people of all social conditions who are free of y formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free d willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the ovement and with one another through large or small gatherings, blications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious stitutions, can form part of the Movement too because the ovement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Chris- n religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. so those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted one or another of the Movement's aspects.

EN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another ovement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and e Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age oups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attrac- l by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have mmitted themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The n use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction ey have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the otive for everything they do.

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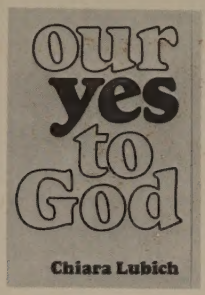

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THE TALKS OF THE 1981 MARIAPOLIS

"A celebration without end" is how Vincent de Paul describes the lives of those who say "yes" to God by doing his will.

In this book Chiara Lubich explores the many facets of doing God's will, which is one of the central points in the life of the Focolare Movement she founded. Her central thesis is: God is love, and there can be no better way of loving him in return than by doing what he asks of us.

First she puts this fundamental intuition to the test of Scripture. She then moves on to the experiences of some of the great saints, and draws upon the teachings of the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and the recent popes.

This book is stimulating and practical. It shows that doing God's will involves much more than mere passivity or resignation. Moreover, throughout the book, Chiara Lubich points out that doing God's will is the way to true freedom and to our total fulfillment as human beings.

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